

# *Aglow International*

**Aglow International** is an interdenominational organization of Christian women and men. Formerly known as **Women's Aglow Fellowship**, it has more than 200,000 members meeting together each month through local Aglow groups in 171 nations.<sup>[1][2]</sup>

More than 21,000 Aglow leaders worldwide minister in their communities.<sup>[2]</sup> An estimated 17 million people each year are ministered to through over 1,250 community, neighborhood and workplace groups in the US, as well as 3,101 local groups internationally.<sup>[3]</sup> The organization was born in 1967 out of the charismatic movement that swept the US in the 1960s. The name *Aglow* is taken from the book of Romans 12:11.<sup>[4]</sup>

Although Aglow has an overarching mission and identity, each local group

is allowed to develop ministries which are best suited to the immediate needs and social characteristics of its community. Aglow is concerned with every aspect of believer's lives, and this is reflected in a diversity of ministry programs.<sup>[5]</sup> Aglow's activities include small group studies, care (support) groups, retreats, and annual conferences. Aglow groups also offer practical gifts of clothing, food, house cleaning, and babysitting, as well as the mentorship of young people. They impact their communities by reaching out to people in prison, in senior

homes, inner city neighborhoods, and mental institutions; to single moms, as well as to the next door neighbor.

Aglow International is a non-profit organization and is a member of the Evangelical Council for Financial Accountability (ECFA).<sup>[6]</sup> It is headquartered in Edmonds, Washington.

## History

Aglow began in 1967 with four women who expressed a desire to meet together as Christians without

denominational boundaries.<sup>[7]</sup> The four women were wives of members of the Full Gospel Business Men's Fellowship International. The women wanted a similar women's devotional association, "one where 'those coming into the charismatic renewal could meet to pray, fellowship, and listen to the testimonies of other Christian women.'" In a few months the women had formed the Full Gospel Women's Fellowship which spread rapidly."<sup>[8]</sup> The first general meeting in Seattle drew more than 100 women to the Meany Hotel close to the University of

Washington campus. It did not take long for women who attended that first meeting to invite their neighbors and friends to regular meetings in other communities surrounding Seattle. Word spread, and new groups began springing up around Washington.

By 1972, more than 60 local groups held monthly meetings around the U.S.,<sup>[7]</sup> and the Full Gospel Women's Fellowship was incorporated as the Women's Aglow Fellowship International.<sup>[9]</sup> Within the next year, groups began in Canada, New Zealand,

and The Netherlands, making Aglow an international "network of caring women."

In 1981, Aglow's President, Jane Hansen, began to speak and write about the restoration of women according to the significance of their created role as outlined in the Bible. This grew into Aglow's teaching on the importance of male/female reconciliation in the Church.<sup>[10]</sup> In 1991 and 1995, Aglow began focusing on ministering to Muslims.<sup>[11]</sup> Aglow tries to bring awareness about Islam to

Christians and also sponsors an Arabic Language television show that is geared specifically for Muslim women.<sup>[5]</sup> Women's Aglow Fellowship changed its name to Aglow International in 1995. This change was instituted to encompass the growing global nature of the organization.

In 2001, Aglow decided to stand with and support the nation of Israel and the Jewish people in the following areas:<sup>[12]</sup>

- To expose anti-Semitism and false



doctrines which seek to destroy the Jewish people such as Replacement Theology or Supersessionism, calling for repentance in the Church at large;

- To love, support, honor, and esteem the Jewish people as the root from which Christianity has grown (Romans 11:18)<sup>[13]</sup>

Aglow marked its 40th year in 2007. More than 200,000 Aglow members celebrated worldwide, and many attended commemorative events including an international conference

September 20–23 in the organization's founding city, Seattle, and a tour of Israel - the group's seventh such journey to the Holy Land since 2000.<sup>[11]</sup>

## Structure

Aglow International has a hierarchical leadership structure. Within the United States, local Aglow groups are called Lighthouses.<sup>[14]</sup> Outside the US, these groups are called Candlelight groups.<sup>[15]</sup> The local groups are composed of women who come together for Bible Study, teachings, and

also to perform community outreach tasks and events. Meetings can take place in any location from homes to community halls to prisons.<sup>[7]</sup>

Lighthouses and Candlelight groups are under the leadership of local women who have undergone the requisite leadership training. These leaders are in turn under the authority of Area Teams. Area Teams give oversight to multiple groups in a particular region or area. National Directors or Presidents oversee all the Area Teams in a nation. All the leaders in these offices are indigenous women

who have also undergone leadership training. In keeping with its charismatic roots, Aglow requires all its leaders to show evidence of the Baptism in the Holy Spirit by being able to speak in tongues.<sup>[5]</sup>

In addition, each region in the world has a Prayer Coordinator who oversees and coordinates the prayer ministry under the oversight of the Prayer Director.

The entire structure of Aglow is under the leadership of the International Board of Directors, of which Jane Hansen is the President. This

International Board is composed of 11 women of different nationalities who are Aglow national leaders within their own countries as well. Each Aglow group also has at least one male advisor – usually a person of some prominence within an evangelical church. "This structure, together with leadership seminars for specific regions as well as national and worldwide conferences, comprises an international support network and helps to ensure that each local group reflects Aglow's essential identity."<sup>[5]</sup>

All of the persons in these positions of leadership give their time voluntarily. The only exception is the paid staff of thirty two at the Aglow Worldwide Headquarters in Edmonds, Washington. This staff is responsible for the financial well-being of the organization, the implementation of its goals and purposes, the organization of national conferences and events, and all promotional and advertising materials.

An individual becomes a member of Aglow by entering into what is known as a "covenant partnership".<sup>[16]</sup> This

partnership involves the commitment of regular prayer for the organization as well as financial support in free-will donations. However, people are free to attend Aglow meetings without becoming a covenant partner. Aglow International receives most of its funding from covenant partner donations, individual donations, conference fees, and grants from foundations. A current financial report can be found in the ECFA's web site.<sup>[17]</sup>

## Beliefs and practices

# Mission

Aglow's mission is threefold:<sup>[18]</sup>

1. To restore and mobilize women and men around the world
2. To promote gender reconciliation in the Body of Christ as God designed
3. To amplify awareness of global concerns from a biblical perspective

## Restoration and mobilization of women

Aglow believes that in order to be



restored, a woman must first be saved and restored to relationship with God. Part of restoration is discipleship, prayer, encouragement, emotional healing – all of which come through relationship. Aglow believes that true restoration of a woman can only occur after she has reached a place of desperation and is willing to turn completely to God for help.<sup>[1]</sup> After this act of surrender, God is able to work through her and heal her emotionally and spiritually. In addition to the spiritual restoration of women, Aglow also believes in their physical

restoration and empowerment and works to elevate the status of women worldwide.

To mobilize is "to gather together, to activate, to assemble." Aglow mobilizes women to be servant leaders its international prayer network and leadership development. Any leader within Aglow first has to go through training before she is allowed to take a leadership post.<sup>[5]</sup>

## **Gender reconciliation**

In 1981, the issue of restoration of women led Hansen to the issue of male and female reconciliation in the Church. According to Hansen, this issue seeks to restore the biblical view of God's purpose for creation which Aglow bases on Genesis 1:26-28 . Aglow believes this purpose was to have a family, a people who would share God's life, nature, spirit, vision, and purpose, and through whom God would express his life, power, and glory in the earth.<sup>[19]</sup> Hansen believes that it takes male and female together to fulfill this purpose and that the

restoration of this foundational relationship is necessary before the Church as a whole can fulfill its destiny to express God's image.<sup>[20]</sup>

Hansen believes that women were "uniquely and specifically designed to stand before the man in an intimate, face-to-face relationship."<sup>[21]</sup> However, although women were meant to look to God to find their life, identity, value and significance, since the fall of Eve in the dawn of creation, they have looked instead to men to fulfill these needs. Hansen states that only when "a

woman's heart is turned back to God to meet her needs, she is...free to be the help God intended her to be: to draw the man out of his aloneness by relating on a level that moves past the surface and touches the deep places of his heart. She is then able to stand in a healthy, face-to-face relationship with him."[21]

Aglow offers seminars and workshops to help women in the practical application of male-female reconciliation. The seminars teach women how to find "fulfillment and joy

in their daily relationships...to create families full of joy and marriages free from resentment."<sup>[22]</sup> Participants report that these teachings have helped to restore their marriages and other significant relationships.<sup>[23]</sup>

## **Global concerns**

Aglow women conduct outreach efforts, specifically in refugee camps and war-torn nations. Aglow Relief, a subsidiary of Aglow International, has been incorporated for humanitarian and compassion purposes and is in the

process of applying for 501(c)(3) status with the federal government.<sup>[24]</sup>

Aglow has partnered with many organizations worldwide to further its humanitarian interests. In May 2006, more than \$30,000 and half a ton of humanitarian supplies were carried to Israel in suitcases by 600 men and women in an Aglow-sponsored solidarity tour. This aid was disseminated to many organizations in Israel such as the Yemin Orde Youth Village near Haifa, the Magen David Adom blood donation center in

Jerusalem, the Ethiopian Absorption Center in Mevaseret Zion and the Ma'aynei Hayeshua Medical Center in Bnei Brak.<sup>[25]</sup>

More than \$20,000 was also donated to Aglow members who were victims of Hurricane Katrina. CEO and President, Jane Hansen, made a personal visit to the affected areas to distribute these monies.<sup>[26]</sup> Over \$40,000 and humanitarian supplies were also donated for the relief of victims of the tsunami that hit Asia in December 2004.<sup>[27]</sup>



Aglow also partners with charitable organizations in the cities where their yearly conferences are held.

Conference locations vary from year to year. In 2006, Aglow partnered with the City on a Hill,<sup>[7]</sup> an organization in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, dedicated to meeting the needs of the central city by providing hands-on missions training, faith-based multicultural education, community outreach, economic empowerment, housing developments, and health and social services.<sup>[28]</sup>

Participants at the Aglow conference prayed specifically for this charity and

also made sizeable donations to further its outreach.<sup>[7]</sup>

Aglow has also received many grants and funding from secular organizations. A donation of \$40,000 was made in September 2006 to the Ghana branch of Aglow by Western Union Money Transfer. This money was given in aid of the construction of a women's vocational institute. The vocational institute will offer training in Craft and Handiwork, Management and Catering, Dressmaking, Batik Making, Hairdressing, Secretarial Studies,

Bookkeeping, Accounting,  
Communication Skills, Basic Education,  
as well as Snail and Mushroom  
Farming. Western Union made this  
donation to assist Aglow in their  
mission to empower women in the  
community of Ghana.<sup>[29]</sup>

## **Prayer**

Aglow believes God has called the  
organization to be a "Global House of  
Prayer." Aglow women pray in small  
groups and in large national and  
international gatherings.<sup>[5]</sup> In her book

about Aglow International, *God's Daughters*, R. Marie Griffith states that, "God calls his daughters to perform mighty acts and inaugurate prodigious transformations through their prayers, rendering Christian women vital instruments of regeneration and healing to a broken and dying world."<sup>[1]</sup>

## Criticism

MinistryWatch.org, an independent organization that acts as a "watchdog" for Christian ministries points out the following issues that some people have

with Aglow International:<sup>[30]</sup>

- "Aglow's emphasis on speaking in tongues, particularly in requiring this of its leaders, seems to be out of line with the teachings of Scripture, which do not make tongues-speaking a criterion for leadership.
- Aglow's focus on gender reconciliation within the Church seems to involve accepting women's ordination to pastoral ministry, a recent innovation which many Christians believe is

unbiblical.

- Some people might think that Aglow's teaching on relationships... is heavy on pop psychology and light on Christian doctrine.
- Some Christians have criticized what they perceive as Aglow's ecumenism, particularly the organization's openness to Roman Catholics.
- Some people are wary of Aglow's claims to be an apostolic and prophetic ministry, especially as this entails ongoing special

revelation from God."

## Further reading

*The Journey of a Woman*, Jane Hansen, Regal Books, 1998. *Fashioned for Intimacy*, Jane Hansen with Marie Powers, Regal Books, 1997. *God's Daughters: Evangelical Women and the Power of Submission*, R. Marie Griffith, University of California Press, 1997.

## References

1. *God's Daughters: Evangelical Women and the Power of Submission.* R. Marie Griffith, University of California Press, 1997

2. [1] (Aglow's Web Site)

3. [2] (Aglow's Web Site)

4. [3] (Aglow's web site)

5. MinistryWatch.org's Summary Report on Aglow International

6. MinistryWatch.com's Summary Report on Aglow International



7. *"Aglow Spreads Faith, Community of Women Conference set for Milwaukee"*  
*Milwaukee Journal Sentinel, July 29,*  
*2006*

8. *God's Daughters: Evangelical Women and the Power of Submission.* R. Marie Griffith, University of California Press,  
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10. *Fashioned for Intimacy*, Jane Hansen with Marie Powers, Regal Books, 1997

11. "Aglow International: Still Shining Bright After 40 Years" Archived February 27, 2008, at the Wayback Machine. A. Larry Ross

*Communications*, March 15, 2007

12. Why Aglow and Israel (Aglow's Web Site)

13. Romans 11:18

14. Aglow's Leadership and Team Structure in the US (Aglow's web site)

15. *Aglow's Leadership and Structure Outside the US* (Aglow's Web Site)

16. *Covenant Partnership* (Aglow's web site)

17. *Evangelical Council for Financial Accountability Member Profile*

18. *Aglow's Mission Statement*  
(Aglow's web site)

19. "So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them."  
Genesis 1:27, N.K.J.V.

20. *Fashioned for Intimacy* Jane Hansen with Marie Powers, Regal Books, 1997

21. "Jane Hansen on Male Female Reconciliation" Jane Hansen, October 24, 2004

22. *God's Daughters: Evangelical Women and the Power of Submission.* R. Marie Griffith, University of California Press, 1997

23. *God's Daughters: Evangelical Women and the Power of Submission.* R. Marie Griffith, University of California Press, 1997

24. "Aglow International: Still Shining Bright After 40 Years" A. Larry Ross Communications, March 15, 2007

25. *"Through Fire and Water - Aglow International: A Compassionate Touch"*  
*Jerusalem Post Christian Edition,*  
*October 2006*

26. "Voices from the Gulf" (Aglow's  
web site)

27. "Tsunami Relief Report" (Aglow's  
web site)

28. City on a Hill Vision Statement  
Archived October 10, 2007, at the  
Wayback Machine.

29. "Western Union donates \$40,000 to  
Aglow International" *The Statesman,*  
*September 16, 2006*

### 30. MinistryWatch.org's Summary Report on Aglow International

## External links

- Sudbury Aglow, The Sudbury, Suffolk branch of Aglow International
- Colchester Aglow, Essex branch of Aglow International
- Lowestoft Aglow, Suffolk branch of Aglow International
- St Ives Aglow, The St Ives, Cambridge branch of Aglow International

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